

Wendi Weber
Northeast Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Nomination for the Ira Gabrielson Leadership Award
Advanced Leadership Development Program Cohort 13

Vision and Determination: *Demonstrates innovative, forward-thinking vision and organizational direction; recognizes and integrates key internal and external factors affecting the organization into decision-making; and/or demonstrates the ability to lead through adversity (downsizing, outsourcing, budget reductions and program eliminations).*

Wendi Weber is a creative, forward-thinking leader who has developed an outstanding Regional Directorate Team that effectively, strategically and responsibly guides conservation in the Northeast Region. By utilizing the best science available and engaging and energizing partners, she has effectively leveraged Service resources to accomplish on-the-ground conservation which is having a lasting impact on the ability of species and human communities to coexist and thrive. Her ability to create enthusiasm and support for the Service mission from Regional staff and outside partners makes her an extremely effective leader. Examples of her leadership include using science based decisions to end salmon restoration in the Connecticut and Merrimack Rivers; working with states, NGOs and municipalities to implement Landscape Conservation Design across the Connecticut River watershed; working with 6 states to conserve and manage habitat for the New England Cottontail in an attempt to preclude the need to list; and working tirelessly with Congressional members and Department officials to implement over \$86 million in response and restoration funds to FWS resources after hurricane Sandy.

Commitment and Integrity. *Instills mutual trust and confidence; behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others; demonstrates commitment to the Service mission and a sense of responsibility and commitment to public service.*

Wendi is an effective leader who listens to others, engages staff and partners in making decisions, is open and transparent, builds and instills trust, treats others with respect and is committed to public service and achieving Service goals and objectives to attain mission accomplishment. She is interested in developing staff and has worked to provide the tools and resources necessary for personal growth and development which results in increased worker satisfaction and productivity, benefitting the Service and the American public. Region 5 has implemented a number of programs to support their staff including having a nurse on site, instituting the Lead your Life program which helps staff achieve personal fulfillment and professional success, requiring all staff to take the crucial conversations course to develop themselves and create better working relationships and a better working environment where all are heard and respected, and hiring a Leadership Development coordinator. Under Wendi's leadership, managers are focusing on articulating outcomes and holding people accountable for achieving those outcomes.

Leadership Qualities. *Demonstrates leadership in the following areas: leading people; business acumen; building coalitions; results driven; and leading change.*

Wendi is the kind of leader you want to emulate. She treats others with respect and shows appreciation for their efforts through personal gestures such as writing and leaving handwritten notes of thanks and congratulations for a job well done. Through gestures such as this she demonstrates the value she places on each member of her staff and their contributions. She has led the Northeast Region through sequestration and a challenging economic climate, making difficult decisions and streamlining operations to achieve goals while not losing sight of the impacts of these decisions on people, species and their habitats. Wendi understands the importance of good communication with external customers, particularly in areas where protecting endangered species may mean adjusting normal operating procedures and practices such as on popular beaches where piping plover nest. Through her work with elected officials and affected communities, she seeks to understand their concerns and collaborate with them on solutions. Wendi has worked with the Leadership Development Coordinator to put together a “Supervisors Connect” program to help Region 5 supervisors be the best they can be and transform the workplace to effectively lead people and lead change. In respect to business acumen, Wendi has worked with coalitions on the New England Cottontail and Connecticut River project, referenced above, with a keen awareness of the need for exemplary customer service and a goal of building strong relationships to achieve on-the-ground conservation. She has also been extremely effective in accomplishing restoration and resilience in the wake of hurricane Sandy and the devastation it wrought in Region 5. While embarking on that restoration and resiliency work Wendi has been able to effectively message to conservation constituencies and the American public the importance of habitat connectivity, why we need to ensure fish passage, the benefits of restoring marshes so they can serve as natural barriers to buffer the impacts of extreme weather events, and the importance of green infrastructure. By imparting this information, Wendi is raising awareness of the impacts of sea level rise and climate change in the Northeast. Underlying her efforts, Wendi is results driven and cognizant of the need for explicit performance metrics on conservation management decisions to help the Service move the needle on conservation.